



**SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)
WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP**
District Headquarters, 3301 Gun Club Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Monday, December 15, 2014, 5:00 PM

WRAC RECREATION ISSUES WORKSHOP SUMMARY

ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS – Newton Cook, WRAC Recreation Issues Chair

Mr. Cook introduced himself and welcomed Recreational Workshop attendees.

ITEM 2 - RECREATION DISCUSSION, UPDATES, FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

Future presentations requested included:

- Paradise Run water levels have changed and is now flooded and filled with water lettuce, hyacinths and cattails. An update on Paradise run water levels is needed to address the issue.

Attendees expressed the following concerns or made the following announcements:

- Scott Sommer, Florida Sportsmen's Conservation Association (FSCA) presented Land Stewardship staff with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of its Youth Hunt Program
- Increasing water levels in Water Conservation Area 2 has created need for added fill in the parking lot so that vehicles do not have to be parked in standing water
- Need to develop a rule or protocol to address hunting exotic animals that have moved into the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes or other state owned property
- WRAC RIW Chairman, Newton Cook, announced the first of two youth waterfowl hunts that will take place in the Stormwater Treatment Areas in January
- A Kissimmee River Valley Sportsman Association (KRVSA) member brought in a design of a push down gate for consideration by District staff to replace the previous airboat gate in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes
- Steve Coughlin, Land Stewardship Section Administrator, announced that Jim Schuette was promoted to the position of Land Management Section Leader following the retirement of Bert Trammell
- FSCA members invited stakeholders to attend Youth Day at Everglades Youth Camp on February 7, 2015 for the first time in 15 to 17 years including multiple types of recreational activities including kayaking and trail hikes
- A member of the Florida Trails Association announced a group hike taking place beginning on February 14, 2015 around Lake Okeechobee to Hobe Sound Beach

ITEM 3 – Overview of the Wildlife Foundation of Florida

Judie Gibson, Development Director, Wildlife Foundation of Florida, provided an overview of the Everglades Youth Conservation camp and provided details on planned updates to the camp ground and facilities.

ITEM 4 – Everglades Holiday Park Update

Dan West, Director of Broward County Parks and Recreation, introduced Martin Gross, P.E., Engineer IV, Broward County Highway Construction and Engineering Division and Stephen Williams, P.E., Vice President, Keith and Associates, Inc., to provide an update on plans to improve vessel access and vehicle parking at Everglades Holiday Park

- Participants expressed concern regarding the proposed airboat ramp design being used in the current plans and requested slight modifications to address possible conflicts including the need to separate airboat ramps from other vessels such as bass boats
- Participants requested to relocate the tournament weigh-in station in relation to the new boat ramps to which the Park representatives stated that moving the location or adding a new weigh-in station is being considered
- A brief discussion took place regarding a paved airboat ramp to be used in coordination with a grassy area or ramp with plastic boards for airboat use instead of two paved airboat ramps
- Park representatives informed participants of an Ad Hoc committee formed to help sort through these types of issues and the presence of Mr. Cook at these meetings. Park representatives said they have and will continue to reach out to the airboat community to encourage participation. The group was reassured that planning was in the conceptual stage and stakeholder input is being considered in design plans going forward
- A participant asked if the boat ramps extended into L-67 and if so, if the Park had reached out to the United States Corps of Engineers (USACE) to make sure design plans worked in concert with the Central Everglades Planning Process (CEPP). Park representatives said that they coordinated closely with the District on projects in the area and current and future water elevations. District staff stated that CEPP implementation would allow for two additional boat ramps extending about five miles out into the Everglades; one that would allow navigation into Miami and the other into L-67C
- Participants pointed out a statement Park representatives made regarding “picking up an area” and asked how that would be done. Park representatives clarified that the facility being constructed must be able to withstand water fluctuations from a high of elevation 11 to a low of about elevation 4 so the land will be built up in certain areas using trucked-in fill to keep the facility from going under water in the late rainy season

ITEM 5- Vegetation Management within the Stormwater Treatment Areas

Lou Toth, Principal Ecologist, Vegetation Management Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD, provided an overview of vegetation management in Stormwater Treatment Areas.

- Participants expressed an appreciation for the complex job of STA managers and their willingness to allow hunters on the property
- Participants articulated general concern regarding the political pressure to move more water south which may be causing increased strain on STAs causing STA features to change from open marsh to dense cattail. Mr. Toth explained that giant bulrush is planted and cattails are allowed to grow in marsh areas to form energy breaks and evenly distribute water flow. This prevents wind and flow from uprooting SAV and eroding levees. These emergent plants are arranged in solid walls to prevent “rivers” or short circuits so that nutrients in the water are distributed to more plants. Mr. Toth added that when cattail is becoming too dense it is reduced to allow submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) ample room to grow

- Participants asked about the extreme influx of water over the summer months and how water managers maintain the phosphorus levels being released into the Everglades with such a large volume of water. Staff responded that although it was a wet summer STA water volumes were not unusual this year since there were no hurricanes or tropical storms contributing to flooding and pumps maintain target depths within all of the cells and giant bulrush is planted in emergent vegetation areas that may be prone to deep flooding

ITEM 6- Northeast Everglades Natural Area (NENA) Trail System

Sally Channon, Sr. Environmental Analyst, Department of Environmental Resources Management, Palm Beach County, provided an overview of the Northeast Everglades Natural Area.

- The presentation included a brief overview of the area NENA lands cover and its ownership
- Participants asked if fishing opportunities were available and accessible to recreation users including children. Ms. Channon said there are fishing opportunities available to residents in the area including locations at Pine Glades, Limestone Creek, Riverbend Park and on the C-18
- Participants asked how hikers get safely across Highway 710. Ms. Channon advised that an underpass is currently being worked on and being funded by the Florida Department of Transportation to get recreation users safely across HW 710

ITEM 7 - Public Use Project Updates

Dan Cotter, Section Leader and Jerry Krenz, Sr. Planner, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD, provided a brief update on the District's STA 1 West expansion project, conceptual FWC rule changes, and airboat signage on the Kissimmee River.

- Participants suggested to list "no outboard motors" in the FWC rules for the Dupuis Management Area to eliminate the use of mudboats or other motorized vessels in the area or define the area motorized vessels are allowed
- District staff invited stakeholders to attend a field review on Saturday, January 31st at 9:00am at the Istokpoga Canal Boat Ramp to offer information and review exiting maps, uses, and ownership in an effort to begin a discussion regarding sign placement in the Kissimmee River
- A participant asked about the process for permits issued by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection including whether the Rolling Meadows project had received its permits

Adjourn

Mr. Cook thanked everyone for coming and announced that the next WRAC meeting will be held on Thursday, January 8, 2015 with the next WRAC Recreational Issues Workshop to be held on Monday, March 16, 2015 and at District headquarters.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.